

DIOCESE ON THE NIGER
FOLLOW-UP STUDIES FOR GROWTH IN CHRIST.

From The Bishop's Desk.

Over the years, as we have visited our various congregations in the Diocese, we have seen the need to resound the Gospel. And as we encouraged the people to respond, we have seen so many people either give their lives to Christ or re-dedicate their commitment. While this has been a great joy to our hearts, we have also seen the need for an effective structure to nurture this faith and commitment in order to enable people to grow and mature in faith. We have commissioned this **Follow-Up Studies** to help do exactly that.

These studies are designed to be used in groups; but they can also be used at home by individuals who for one reason or another may be unable to get to a group. Our hope is that over the ten weeks of study, your faith will grow and deepen so that you can be effective members of your Church communities and discover what tasks God has for you in His Vineyard.

We are grateful to the Bishop On The Niger for the kind permission to publish and use this material.

+ Bishop

Bishop of Diocese of

STUDY ONE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

General Introduction:

Welcome to the household of faith. The fact that you are using these study materials means that you have understood that you are not God's child just because you were baptized and confirmed. It is not even because of regular Bible reading and prayer; nor is it a matter of going to Church regularly, attending all mid-week meetings, and giving generously to the church. To become a child of God you have to acknowledge what is often called *The Four Spiritual Laws*:

- a) *That God loves you and wants to have a Father – child relationship with you. John 3: 16, 10: 10*
- b) *That because of your sins, that relationship is not possible in your sinful state. Is. 53: 6, 64: 6, Rom. 3: 23, 6: 23*
- c) *That Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so you can know and experience God's love personally. Is. 53: 4-5, John 3: 16-18, 14: 6, Rom 5: 8*
- d) *That you need to ask Jesus to come into your life as your Lord and Saviour, so that you can be a true child of God and know His love in a real way. John 1: 11-12, Rom 6: 23, Eph. 2: 8-9, Rev. 3: 20.*

Hopefully, you have gone through these four steps and taken step four to become a child of God. Since you have already accepted your need for new birth, this study will help you to understand more clearly what you have done and help you gain the deeper understanding you need for your new life in Christ.

YOUR NEW LIFE EXPLAINED:

We have new life only when we ask Jesus into our lives. Then we will be able to see and enter the Kingdom of God – *John 3: 3-5*. Sinful man does not need a new law but a new heart from God and each of us has to come to God by faith and receive it. It cannot be passed on from parents to children. *John 1: 12* says that people have to each receive it for themselves. *John 3: 16* tells us that only those who believe, receive eternal life. Only the Spirit of God alone enables each of us to take this all-important step of faith. We sincerely hope that you have done this.

As you read the passages and answer the questions that follow, you will understand more clearly what you have done in accepting Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

Rom 3: 23, John 3: 3-5

- a) Why do we need to be born again?
- b) What is the difference between this and your physical birth?

John 1: 11-12

- a) How does one become a child of God?
- b) Why is it important not just to believe, but also to receive what God has to offer? James 2: 19

Romans 6: 23

- a) What is special about this new life?
- b) What will happen if we do not accept this new life?

Revelation 3: 20

- a) What does Jesus offer us?
- b) What should you do for this offer to be yours?
- c) Have you done it?
- d) How do you know you have new life?

John 3: 16, Romans 6: 23, Colossians 1: 21-22

- a) How much did your new life cost you?
- b) How much did your new life cost God?
- c) How long can you have your new life?

BENEFITS OF THE NEW LIFE:

Find out from the following verses, the benefits of your new life in Christ.

- a. *John 3: 16, John 5: 24* – Now that you have believed, what do you gain?
- b. *2 Cor. 5: 17* – According to this verse, you are a new creature. What does it mean, and how does it work out in your daily life?
- c. *Is. 61: 10* – What two things does God give us?
- d. *1 John 3: 2, Eph. 4: 6* – When you accept Christ what do you become, and what does God become to you?
- e. *Acts 1: 8* – What do we receive according to this verse, and why do we receive it?

None of us can get to heaven as we are, because we are all conceived and born in sin (Ps. 51: 5). Nor can we by doing good deeds make God accept us (Gal 2: 16, Eph. 2: 8-9). The only way is to do it God's way – accept His free offer in Christ, Who through His death paid the penalty for our sins. This is the new birth and is something each of us can have freely when we ask Jesus to come into our lives as our Lord and Saviour.

Have you asked Jesus to come into your life? Make sure you have, before you continue with these Follow-Up studies. If you are not sure, then follow the four steps at the beginning of this study!

Memory Verse: John 1: 11-12.

STUDY TWO **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION**

Introduction:

Last week, we looked at the new life and found out that it is a free gift from God. We also discovered the benefits we receive in this new life after we have taken the step of faith and asked Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour. But how can we be truly sure that Jesus truly lives in us and that we are now children of God?

WHO CAN HAVE THIS ASSURANCE?

- a. *John 1: 12-13* – Only those who have believed and received Jesus into their lives.
- b. *John 10: 27-30* – Only the sheep who hear and follow Jesus.
- c. *2 Cor. 5: 17* – Those who have changed their positions and are now in Christ by faith. They become new creatures.

WHERE AND HOW CAN WE GET THIS ASSURANCE?

We do not get assurance based on how we feel.

- a. *Matt. 7: 22-27* – We may feel that we are children of God because of all the things we do in the name of Jesus, but He will say He does not know us, because we have not accepted Him as our Lord and Saviour, nor have we lived our lives in obedience to His word.

- b. *Matt. 25: 1-13* – The foolish virgins felt they were ready for the feast, but they were left out when the bridegroom arrived. When they tried to enter, they were told the bridegroom did not know them.
- c. *Luke 13: 25-27* – Jesus warned that in the last day, some of the people who claimed to have known and interacted with Him will be shut out of His Kingdom. Therefore, feeling that you are Christian does not make you one. You must trust in Christ as your Lord and Saviour as the only way to be sure.

Being a member of the Church and doing good works do not give assurance of salvation either.

- a. *Gal. 2: 16* – Our good works cannot make us right with God.
- b. *Is. 64: 6* – Our righteousness is like filthy rags before God.
- c. *Eph. 2: 8-9* – We cannot earn our salvation through good works, lest anyone should boast.

THE TRUE SOURCES OF ASSURANCE:

- 1. ***The Witness of Scripture: Read the following passages to reassure yourself.***
 - a. *John 1: 11-12, 3: 16, 10: 28-29* – These passages assure us that when we receive Christ, we become God's children and have eternal life.
 - b. *Rom. 10: 9-10* – The Word of God assures us that we are saved when we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord.

- c. *Eph. 1: 7-14* – These verses repeatedly assure us that we are redeemed in Christ.
- d. *I John 5: 9-13* – John says he wrote, so that we can believe in Jesus and be sure we are eternal life.

2. *The Witness of the Holy Spirit:*

Rom 8:16 tells us that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are God's children. This witness is in three parts:

- a. *He witnesses to us* – *Heb 10: 15*. He assures us of the work Jesus did on the Cross for our salvation. Because of that work, we are made perfect forever.
- b. *He witnesses with us* – *Rom. 8: 16*. When we receive Christ as Lord we know it in our hearts, and the Holy Spirit confirms this fact to our own spirits.
- c. *He witnesses in us* – *I John 5: 10-13*. When we receive Christ, we have the Holy Spirit's witness in us to assure us that we are children of God.

3. *The Witness of a Changed Life:*

- a. *2 Cor 5: 17* – We receive the new nature from the Holy Spirit which enables us to live as children of God.
- b. *Gal. 5: 16-24* – Our lives will begin to drop the characteristics of the old nature when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. He will then help us to begin to show the characteristics of life in the Spirit listed in *Gal. 5: 22-23*. People become convinced that we are truly children of God.

Our feelings change from day to day based on what is going on in our lives, so we cannot trust them for assurance that we are children of God. The good news is that we have reliable witness outside of ourselves that we can trust. We have God's Word, the Bible, which is true because God cannot lie – *Numbers 23: 19*. We also have the Holy Spirit's witness in us as He uses God's Word to speak to us and reassure our hearts. Finally, we have the witness of changed lives as we see the work the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives to change us and make us better people for God.

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 5: 17

STUDY THREE

New Family, New Family Relationships – 1

Introduction:

All of us are born into natural families where we have relationships at different levels. When you give your life to Jesus Christ, you also become part of a new spiritual family. This, like the natural family, also involves relationships and responsibilities.

Part 1: A New Relationship With God

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

John 1: 11-13

How do you become a child of God?

John 10: 27-29

- How long can you be a child of God?
- What do you receive as a child of God?
- What does God promise to do for you, His child?

- What is your responsibility as God's child?
- How can you carry out this responsibility on a daily basis?

John 10: 10

- a. What kind of life does God offer you as His child?
- b. In what ways may you experience this life daily?

2 Cor 5: 17

- a. As a new creature in Christ, what old things in your life should you give up so that the new nature can come through?
- b. Make a list of these and ask God to help you to successfully give them up.

Galatians 5: 22-24

- a. Make a list of the new things God wants your life to portray, so that people will know you are truly His child.
- b. What do you need to do to make sure that you begin to develop these characteristics?

A good father takes responsibility for his children. As a good and loving Father, God promises to do certain things for us His children. The following verses tell you some of them:

- a. *Exodus 15: 26* – He heals us.
- b. *Matt. 6: 31-32* – He will provide for us. See also *Phil. 4: 19*
- c. *Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5-6* – He will be with us always.

- d. *Luke 11: 13; John 14: 16* – He will give us His Holy Spirit.
- e. *Deut. 33: 27; John 10 27-28* – He will keep us secure.
- f. *Hebrews 12: 5-8* – He will discipline us when we misbehave.

The children in the family also have their responsibilities. Some of ours are listed below.

- a. *John 14: 15* – To love and obey our Father.
- b. *Luke 11: 2-4* – To talk to our Father in prayer, so that we can get to know Him better.
- c. *Psalms 119: 105* – To allow His Word to show us the right path to take in life so that we can please Him.
- d. *Luke 6: 33* – To put Him first in our lives; that is, make Him number one before anybody or anything else.
- e. *John 15: 10* – To stay close to Him all the time so that we can know and do what He wants.
- f. *1 John 1: 7-9* – To always come to Him and apologise whenever we do wrong. Also we should always try to walk in His ways.
- g. *2 Cor 5: 20* – We should represent Him to the world around us.

There are many other things about our relationship with God which will unfold as we study the Word of God daily. We shall discuss many more areas of this exciting new life in the following weeks. Make sure that you look for ways to put into practice what you learn so that you will continue to be a good representative of your Father who is in heaven.

Memory Verses: John 14: 16, Philippians 4: 19

STUDY FOUR
New Family, New Relationships – 2

Introduction:

In the last study, we saw that every newborn Christian, gets a new Father – God. We also looked at our privileges and responsibilities within this relationship. Today, we will remind ourselves that all those who have asked Jesus into their lives are our brothers and sisters and we belong with them to the Jesus Family, which is the Church. Just as in ordinary families, we have commitments toward both our Father and our brothers and sisters.

Part 2: A New Relationship With Fellow Christians

Just as all living things need the right kind of environment to grow and mature, you as a new baby in Christ also need the Church family to help nurture and grow your faith to maturity. The family of Jesus has instructions from Him on how to worship and fellowship together and we are going to look at some of these in this study.

John 13: 34-35

- a. *What does Jesus expect His family members to do?*
- b. *Why is this very important to Him?*
- c. *What happens when we do not obey this command?*

Psalm 133, John 17: 20-23

- a. *What did Jesus pray for, for His family members?*
- b. *What reason did Jesus give for His prayer? Vs. 21 & 23*
- c. *What can you and other family members do to ensure that His prayer is answered?*

Acts 2: 41-47

- a. *What activities did the first members of the Jesus Family engage in?*
- b. *Is it possible for Jesus' Family to live like that today? Give reason for your answer.*

One of the important commands Jesus gives members of His Family is to forgive those who wrong them. Look at the following passages and see what you can learn about forgiveness.

Matt. 5:23-24, 6: 14-15, 18: 21-35; Eph 4: 32.

1. *In each of these passages, what are we asked to do?*
2. *What happens when we do not obey this command?*
3. *Why was the Master angry with the servant in Matt. 18: 23 – 35?*

Often we find it very difficult to forgive others because they are not sorry for what they have done. The Bible's teaching on forgiveness is that we must forgive others without conditions, just as our Father in heaven forgives us. We must pray that the Lord will help us to obey Him, so that through our obedience, the world will know that we are truly His disciples.

Memory Verse: John 13: 34

STUDY FIVE

New Family, New Relationships – 3

Introduction:

Last week, we began to look at the things Jesus would like us to do in order to show that we are part of His family. If we obey these instructions, the family will work smoothly, and the world will know that we are truly His disciples. This week, we shall continue to look at other aspects of the responsibilities of this new relationship – our duties to others within the family.

Read The Following Passages And Discover Your Other Duties As A Child Of God.

Romans 12: 6-8; I Corinthians 12: 4-11 (or 4-31 if you have enough time). In the family, everyone has responsibilities.

- a. *What is the duty of every child of God according to Romans 12: 6?*

- b. *Why should we all do our duties as responsible members of the family I Cor. 12: 18-21?*

In *Romans 12: 4-5*, Paul says: *“just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s Body. We are all parts of His One Body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others” (Living Translation)*. This shows that as members of the family, each of us has gifts and abilities which God wants us to use to help the family work more effectively. When we are all doing what we have to do, we will realize our usefulness, and will feel fulfilled as children of God. Moreover, the Church family will experience spiritual growth.

Proverbs 11: 24-25; Luke 6: 38; 2 Cor. 8: 1-9, 9: 6-12; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19

The Bible encourages us in these passages to give.

- a. *What two things were special about the giving of the poor Macedonians – 2 Cor. 8: vs. 3 & 5?*
- b. *What teaching did Jesus give about giving – Luke 6: 38?*
- c. *How should we give and why – 2 Cor. 9: 7?*
- d. *What good does our giving do – 2 Cor. 9: 12?*
- e. *What does Paul advise the rich to do with their wealth in 1 Tim. 6: 17-19?*

Acts 4: 32-5: 11, 6: 1-2; James 1: 27

In Matt. 25: 31-46, Jesus leaves us in no doubt that He cares about how we look after other people, especially members of His Family, the Church.

- a. *What good example did the first members of the family set for us in Acts 4: 32-37?*
- b. *What bad example in Acts 5: 1-11 must we avoid?*
- c. *What problems must we guard against – Acts 6: 1-2?*
- d. *According to James 1: 27, why should we look after widows and orphans?*

Galatians 6: 1-2

- a. *What responsibility do we have towards others in these verses?*

b. How can we put it into practice in our churches in this Diocese?

Psalm 122; Hebrews 10: 24-25

a. What is the advice here?

b. What will you gain from following this advice as a new Christian?

Matt. 28: 19-20; Acts 13: 1-2

a. What does Jesus command His family to do in Matt. 28: 19-20?

b. The first Christians showed us one way to do it in Acts 13. Can we do the same today?

c. In what other ways can we obey this command in Matt. 28 today?

Jesus calls His Family to be salt and light in the world today – *Matt. 5: 13-16*. When we try to put into practice all that we have learned in this study, people will begin to see changes in our lives and will be challenged to give their lives to Jesus, so they can become members of His Family too.

Memory Verse: Matthew 5: 16

STUDY SIX
PRAYER: TALKING TO GOD

Introduction:

Prayer is simply talking to God, something all of us can do, any time, anywhere. It is a very important means of deepening our relationship with God. Prayer was very important to Jesus in

His life and ministry. Through prayer, He spent time with His Father in order to find out His will in every situation. For you to grow in your new life and become more like Christ, you need to emulate His example on prayer. The Bible is full of examples both in the Old and New Testaments, of people who prayed, giving us many patterns for prayer. However, Jesus gave a pattern for prayer which we call the Lord's Prayer.

When We Pray, Our Prayer Should Cover Four Areas:

- a. *Adoration – Praise:* This is lifting God's Name up in worship for who He is and what He has done and continues to do for us – *Ps. 13: 1-3,5; Eph. 3: 14-15.*
- b. *Confession – Saying Sorry:* When we come to God, we need to recognise that we have done things wrong. Because God is holy, we cannot come into His presence and have meaningful communication except we first say sorry for these sins and receive His forgiveness – *Ps. 66: 18; 1 John 1: 7-10.*
- c. *Thanksgiving – Saying Thank You:* We need to be grateful to God for all that He has already given us, before we can start asking for more – *Ps. 107: 1, 136; Phil. 4: 6; 1 Thess. 5: 18.*
- d. *Supplication – Asking for our Needs:* Because God is now your Father you can talk to Him about everything, however small. He is interested, and He promises to provide for all your needs. So, go ahead and ask for yourself, your family and your friends – *Eph. 1: 15-16; Phil. 1: 3-4; 1 Thess. 1: 2-3; 1 Tim 2: 1-2,8.*

When Should We Pray? *Ps 34: 1, 1 Thess. 5: 17, Heb. 13: 5*

How Should We Pray? Pick out the various ways from the following verses:

Matt. 6: 6-7 – 2 things

Mark 11: 24,25 - 2 things

Luke 18: 1

Psalm 66: 18

*Matt. 21: 21-22,
John 14: 13-14, 16: 24*

*Mark 11: 23
I Tim. 2: 8 – 2 things*

Why Should We Pray? *Matt. 7: 7-8; Is. 55: 6; John 16: 24*

What Can Hinder Our Prayers?

Ps. 66: 18

Is. 59: 1-2

Ps. 32: 3-4,

James 1: 6-8.

*However, Ps. 32: 5 and I John 1: 8-9 give us the solution.
What is it?*

Does God Always Answer Our Prayers?

The answer is yes! God always answers every prayer we pray, but He does not always give us what we ask for. He may say *yes, no or wait*. Like the loving Father He is, He gives us what is best for us from His own perspective, even if sometimes we do not understand what He is doing!

- ❑ *2 Sam 12: 15-18* – what was God's answer to David?
- ❑ *2 Cor 12: 9* – what did He say to Paul?
- ❑ *2 Chron. 20: 1-3, 14-17* – how did God answer Jehoshaphat?
- ❑ *Acts 12: 3-11* – how did God respond to the prayers of the Church?

God may not always give us what we are asking for, but we have to believe God's word that all things work together for good to them that love God – *Rom 8: 28*. When God says no or wait, it is because He is working in our lives to produce some good which will help shape us into the image of His Son Jesus Christ – *Rom 8:29*. However, it is important that we continue to talk to God regularly. We get to know our friends and family better by talking to them and spending time in their company, sharing our joys, sorrows and needs. The same is true of our relationship with God. We must not only pray

when we want something from God. The main reason for praying is to develop our relationship with our heavenly Father, to get to know His will for our lives, and to draw strength from Him to be able to live truly like His children on earth. Asking for our needs should come second to that! Talking to God is what prayer is all about, so start practising today!

Memory Verse: Philippians 4: 6-7

STUDY SEVEN

Bible Study: Letting God Speak To You

Introduction:

Prayer is talking to God; reading the Bible is allowing God to talk to you. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and through it, God wants to reveal Himself to us. To grow in our relationship with God, therefore, we need to read His Word regularly so we can hear and understand what He wants us to be, and how He wants us to live.

The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God – 2 Tim. 3: 16-17, 2 Peter 1: 19-21.

About forty writers from different backgrounds wrote it over a period of 1,600 years. Yet it has wonderful unity, showing that God oversaw the whole project.

Why Should We Read The Bible? Read the following verses and discover many reasons:

Psalm 19: 7-11

Psalm 119:104-105

2 Tim 3: 15-17

Psalm 119: 9, 11,

Eph. 6: 17

Hebrews 4: 12

How Should We Read The Bible?

Many groups like the Scripture Union, have published advice on how we can get the most out of reading the Word of God. To study the bible, it will help if you have a regular time and place, as well as pen and paper to write your thoughts. We pass on these tips, hoping that they will help you.

Read the passage and ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is speaking and to whom?
- What is the passage talking about and is there any other passage in the Bible related to what you have read?
- What is the passage saying about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- *Apply the passage to your life.* Ask yourself whether God is telling you something about sins to confess, promises to claim, examples to follow or instructions to obey.
- *Memorise verses that will help you to grow – Ps. 119: 11.*
- *Meditate on what you have read.* This is spending time to think about what you have read and to ask the Holy Spirit to help you to make it a part of your life – *Josh. 1: 8; Ps 1, Ps. 119: 15, 148; I Tim 4: 13, 15.*

When Should We Read The Bible?

Just as we eat daily to feed our bodies, we need to read our Bibles daily to feed our souls and keep them healthy – *Josh. 1: 8; Deut. 6: 6-9, 11: 18.*

The Bible is our spiritual food and by reading it daily, we give our lives good balanced spiritual diet, so that we can live healthy spiritual lives that will please God. The Holy spirit has been given to us as our Teacher; therefore, when we read the Bible we must ask His help to understand and obey it – *James 1: 22-27*. Apart from providing us good, balanced spiritual diet, reading the Bible daily will also provide us the weapon to fight temptation in our lives as Jesus did during His own temptations – *Matt. 4: 1-11*. Someone has said that because it is the Word of God, we should read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practise it to be holy. This is advice that we will do well to heed!

Memory Verses: Psalm 119: 11, 105

STUDY EIGHT
The Holy Spirit

Introduction:

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity – the others being God the Father and Jesus, God the Son. This may be difficult for you to understand, but do not worry about it. The most important thing is to know that Jesus promised to send Him to be with us and in us – *John 14: 17*, to enable us live like children of God. In this study, we will learn a bit more about who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

He Is A Person.

Matt. 28: 19; 2 Cor 13: 14; Heb 9: 14 – He is Eternal like God the Father and God the Son and equal with Them. Many passages in the Bible tell us the things that the Holy Spirit does which prove that He is God and a Person. Some of them are listed below to help you understand more:

- *Gen. 1: 1-2; Psalm 104: 23* – He was involved in creation

- *Is. 40: 13-14; I Cor 2: 10* – He knows everything
- *Psalm 139: 7-10* – He is everywhere
- *Micah 3: 8; Matt. 12: 28; Acts 1: 8* – He gives power for work
- *Rom. 8: 11* – He raised Jesus to life and will raise us too in the end.
- *John 16: 8-11* – He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, showing that only the Spirit can help the unbeliever to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.
- *John 14: 26* – He teaches.
- *Acts 8: 29, 13: 2; I Tim 4: 1* – He speaks
- *Rom 8: 14; Gal. 5: 18* – He leads believers
- *Rom 8: 26-27* – He prays / intercedes.
- *Eph. 4: 30* – He can be grieved.
- *Acts 5: 1-11* – We can lie to Him.

He Lives In Believers.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came on people when God wanted them to do something special – *I Sam 10: 10, Ex 31: 1-6*. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit came on Jesus at His Baptism and dwelt completely on Him, enabling Him to accomplish the work of salvation. Jesus promised that when He went away, He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell

believers – *John 7: 39, 14: 16-17*. Today, He lives in everyone who believes in Jesus. Look at the following verses:

Rom 8: 9, 15-16

1 Cor 12: 13,

Gal. 4: 6

1 Cor 6: 19

2 Cor 1: 21-22

Eph. 4: 30

God gives Him to us, to prove that we belong to Him – *Eph. 1: 13, 4: 30; 1 John 2: 18,20*.

He Baptizes / Fills Believers.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled believers, and they spoke in other tongues – *Acts 2*. After this, the Book of Acts reports that when Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans, they received the Holy Spirit – *Acts 8: 14-17*. Again, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household – *Acts 10: 44-45*. In *Acts 19: 6*, when Paul laid his hands on baptized Christians, the Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. This spectacular experience of the Spirit is often called Baptism of the Spirit, though the Bible does not use the term. After the Pentecost experience, the Apostles were repeatedly filled with the Holy Spirit – *Acts 4: 8, 31*. It is an experience of being totally immersed in the Spirit, an experience every believer can have and should desire. In fact, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit which is a daily yielding to Him so that He can control our thoughts and actions – *Eph. 5: 18*. We need this top-up continually because we are sinners and will often do things which will grieve the Spirit (*Eph. 4: 30*) for which we will need to ask God for forgiveness. The extent to which we yield to the Spirit's filling will determine how much our lives show that we are God's children. To be filled, we must make Jesus Christ the centre of our lives and give our lives to doing the will of God.

He Empowers Believers:

- ❑ *Gal. 5: 16, 25* – To live for Christ, rather than yield to our old sinful nature.
- ❑ *Phil. 2: 13* – To do God's will.
- ❑ *Acts 1: 8* – To witness for Christ.
- ❑ *Rom 8: 1-14* – To have victory over sin.

We cannot live successful Christian lives without the power of the Spirit. Therefore, make it a habit to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you daily, so that you can live like a true child of God.

Memory Verse: Romans 8: 14

STUDY NINE **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU: WITNESSING**

Introduction:

Someone has described evangelism as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. All human beings need to hear the good news that Jesus died in our place and that by receiving Him into our lives, we will become children of God. When you receive this good news, you owe it as a duty to share it with others – *2 Kings 7: 8-9*. Witnessing is a vital spiritual exercise which the Lord Himself commanded in *Matt. 28: 19-20*. However, we effectively make disciples not just by sharing the gospel, but also by living genuine Christian lives and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit – *Gal. 5: 16 – 23; 1 Pet. 2: 15*. As the previous study showed, the Holy Spirit is key to our success in witnessing.

The Spirit's Job In Witnessing:

- ❑ *Acts 1: 8* – He empowers believers to witness for Christ.
- ❑ *Is. 57: 20-21; Joel 2: 28-32; Rom 2: 1-6, 15-16* – He awakens unbelievers to their true spiritual condition.
- ❑ *John 16: 7-11* – He brings conviction of sin, and makes unbelievers aware of their guilt and God's judgment.

- *John 3: 5-8* – He brings unbelievers to faith.
- *2 Cor 5: 5; Eph. 1: 13* – He seals and equips new believers.
- *Gal. 5: 16-23* – He helps new believers develop Christ-like character.

Our Task In Witnessing:

- a. *John 15: 1-10; Eph. 4: 14-32; Phil. 3: 16-17; 2 Tim 2: 4, 15-16, 21-25* – We should show by our lives that we belong to Christ.
- b. *Matt. 4: 17, 28: 19-20; Acts 2; Col. 1: 26-29* – We should share the Gospel clearly. We should be able tell others that we belong to Christ and why. The *Four Spiritual Laws* set out in the General Introduction at the beginning of this book, is a good format to use.
- c. *2 Cor 5: 18-20* – We should encourage people to give their lives to Christ.
- d. *1 Thess 2: 7-8; 2 Tim 2: 2* – We should nurture new believers.

Hindrances To Effective Witnessing:

- *2 Tim 1: 7 – Fear.* However, because we have the Holy Spirit in us working alongside us, there is nothing to fear (*Acts 4: 13, 18-20; Rom 8: 15*).
- *1 Tim 4: 7; 2 Tim 2: 16; Titus 2: 11-12 – Worldliness.* If we are not living by the standards of God's Word, we will find it difficult to tell others about Jesus because we will not have a good Christian testimony to back up our words. That is why Paul warned the two young men, Timothy and Titus, to reject worldliness and pursue godliness.
- *2 Tim 4: 2; Eph. 5: 16 – Inability To Discern And Use Opportunities.* We are all guilty of not taking our chances to share the Gospel with our friends because we are shy or afraid of how they will react, or even too lazy to discern the promptings of the

Spirit in us. This is why Paul exhorts us to be passionate and to use every opportunity.

How To Witness To Others:

- a. ***Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to people who are ready to listen to the Gospel*** just like Philip was led to the Ethiopian Eunuch in *Acts 8: 26-40*.
- b. ***Be faithful in your study of the Bible*** so that you will have information the Holy Spirit will help you to use at the appropriate time.
- c. ***Pray for insight***, so that you may be able to meet the need of the person.
- d. ***John 4*** – Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well is an excellent example of how to share our faith. We learn some things from Him:
 - *Be Patient.* Jesus was not in a hurry to pour the truth down the woman's throat.
 - *Start where people are and gently take them to where you want them to be* – the point where they decide to receive Jesus into their lives as Lord and Saviour. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch is another good example – see *Acts 8: 26-40*.
 - *Avoid arguments.* You may win the argument, but you will lose the person. Jesus did not argue with the woman. Instead He gently answered her questions and moved on the conversation.
 - *Do not be judgmental.* Even though Jesus knew the kind of woman she was, He never condemned her. God is the only One who has the right to judge. Remember that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and to call sinners to repentance. *Matt. 9: 13; Luke 5: 31-32, 19: 10*

- *Allow the Holy Spirit to show you when the person is ready to make a commitment.* Jesus knew when the woman was ready to be challenged.
- *Learn to Listen to people you are witnessing to.* Jesus paid close attention to the woman and that is why He was able to understand and address her need and eventually lead her to repentance and faith.

Witnessing is a joint venture with the Holy Spirit. We are like farmers sowing seed – *1 Cor 3: 6-9*. We plant, others water, but the growth of the Word of God which results in an unbeliever accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, belongs to the Holy Spirit – *John 4: 34-38; 1 Cor 3: 5-7; John 16: 7*. However, we must give the Holy Spirit materials to work with; that is, we must be in touch with unbelievers – *1 Cor 5: 9-12, 9: 19-23*. We must never see unbelievers merely as targets to be bombarded with the Gospel. We should genuinely love them and seek by God's grace to bring them into the Kingdom. Jesus made friends with unbelievers in order to show them the way back to God – *Matt. 9: 9-13*. He accepts people as they are, but He desires to change them into what God will like them to be. We His disciples must do the same, trusting the Holy Spirit to open their hearts to understand the Gospel message and respond.

STUDY TEN **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU: SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Introduction:

New born babies in Christ need to grow just as natural babies. And like natural babies, they need the right kind of food and environment to grow into healthy, mature Christians. In Studies 5, 6 & 8 we have looked at three important ingredients for growth – *Prayer, Bible Study, and Witnessing*. As we talk to God in prayer and allow Him to talk to us through our study of the Bible, we learn His will and draw strength to go out and share our faith. But there is more we need to know and this is what we shall find out in this study.

To Grow The New Christian Must Actively Belong To The Church Family – Acts 2: 46-47, Heb. 10: 25.

It is within the Church Family that new Christians are fed the right spiritual food, taught discipline and encouraged to mature, as they use their gifts – *1 Peter 2: 2*. To benefit, however, the new Christians must respond positively or they will be spiritually stunted – *Heb. 5: 12-14; 1 Cor 3: 1-2*. Therefore, they should avail themselves of all opportunities within the Church to study the Word and fellowship with other Christians.

To Grow, The New Christian Must Heed John's Command Not To Love The World – 1 John 2: 15-17.

'World' here refers not to the one we see, but the unseen world of evil controlled by Satan. Love of the world is not necessarily external behaviour; that is, the people we mix with, where we go or what we do etc. even though they can be evidence of love of the world. However, love of the world begins in the heart (*Matt. 15:17-20*) and is characterised by wanting to satisfy physical desires (*lust of the flesh*) desire to accumulate things (*lust of the eyes*) and being too concerned about our status and importance (*pride of life*). These are activities of our old nature before we were born again and given the new nature. 2

Cor 5: 17 tells us that the old nature should pass away so that all things can become new. Why is this necessary?

- ***Because nothing can make the old nature better*** – *Jeremiah 17: 9; Mark 7: 21-23*. Our old nature is God's enemy and can never do anything to please God – *Rom. 8: 7-8; Eph. 2: 3; 1 Cor 2: 14*.
- ***Many years of being born again does not improve our old nature***. It is still as bad as before we became born again – *Rom 7: 18-23*.

The good news is that we can have victory over this evil old nature through Christ – *Rom 7: 24-25*. Therefore, we do not have to continue to be slaves to our old nature. Because God is our Father, we now belong to a new family with new characteristics – *1 John 3: 9, 5: 18*. Some of these characteristics of our new nature are as follows:

- a. *2 Cor 5: 17; 2 Peter 1: 4* – ***This New Nature Is A Gift From God***.
- b. *1 John 3: 9, 5: 18* – ***This New Nature Cannot Make A Habit Of Sin***. A Christian may sin, but it is always the old nature that is responsible when we allow it to get the upperhand in our lives.
 - *Galatians 5: 16-18* – Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit, so that we will not behave according to our old nature.
 - *Rom 6: 12-18, 12: 1-2* – As long as we present our bodies to the Holy Spirit so that He can control our lives, He will continue to change us and help us to grow and mature in our relationship with God.
- c. *Rom 7: 22* – ***The New Nature Enjoys The Things Of God***.
 - *Acts 9: 11; 2 Cor 12: 7-9* – In need, it turns to God in prayer.

- *1 Peter 2: 2* – It turns to the Word of God for food.
- *1 John 3: 14* – It responds in love to other believers.
- *Gal. 5: 22-23* – As it yields to the Holy Spirit, it exhibits the fruit of the Spirit.

To Grow, You Must Learn To Resist Temptation. Temptation is not sin, but yielding to it is – Heb. 4: 15, Gal. 5: 16.

- *James 4: 7; 2 Peter 2: 9* – Make a habit of asking God's help so that you can resist temptation.
- *Ps. 119: 11* – Make sure you keep up prayer and Bible Study as preparation for successful battle against temptation.
- *Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5; 1 Peter 1: 5-7* – Always remind yourself that Christ is with you always.
- *Gal. 2: 20; Rom. 6: 6-14* – Remind yourself that you have died with Christ and dead people do not sin.
- *1 Cor 10: 13* – God promises grace and help in temptation, so you must rely on Him to see you through when you are tempted.

To Grow And Mature, You Must Be Honest About Sin In Your Life – 1 John 1: 8-9.

Our old nature need never control our lives as Christians, but unfortunately we do and say things which exhibit the characteristics of that nature. The Bible calls this sin. 1 John 1: 8-10 recognizes this fact and tells us what to do. See also *1 John 2: 1-2; Heb 4: 14-16, 7: 25.*

Growth and maturity in the believer start when we are born again and continue until we die, because we can never be perfect on this side of heaven – *Phil 3: 12-14; 1 John 1: 8-10.* To ensure that we continue to grow and deepen our relationship with the Lord, we must be diligent in prayer and

Bible Study and fellowship with other believers. We must also seek to obey the Lord in our daily lives, shunning those things, people and places which can lead us to sin against God – *1 Thess 5: 21-22; 1 Cor 15: 33-34, Eph 5: 3-11*. Finally, we must daily rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the desire to live close to Him (Phil. 2: 13) so that we can produce the fruit of the Spirit, and the grace and power to overcome temptation.

Memory Verse: 2 Peter 3: 18

STUDY ELEVEN **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU: CHRISTIAN SERVICE**

Introduction:

When God saves and makes us His children in truth, He expects us to live like children of the Kingdom, by the standards of the Kingdom set in His Word. ***Read Carefully later, Matthew Chs. 5-7 to see what these standards are!*** Service to God begins with who we are because that influences what we can do and how we do it. In *Matt. 5: 13-16*, Jesus says that we are the Salt and the Light of the world, a reference to the kind of life we should live for Him, and the example we should set for others. *Rom 12: 1-2* tell us that living holy lives is itself a form of service to God, which He values very much.

What Should We Do To Prepare Ourselves To Serve God Effectively?

- *John 15: 1-10; Col. 2: 6-7* – We must learn to abide in Christ. To abide means to remain faithful and true to our commitment to Him. We have to form the habit of daily obeying Him so that the work we do for Him may bear fruit.

- *Gal 5: 16-23; Rom 6: 12-18* – We must confront and overcome sin in our lives as we saw in last week's Study, so that the life of the Spirit can flow through us.
- *1 Cor 9: 24-27; 2 Tim 2: 2-4, 15* – We must discipline ourselves so that we can work for God in a way that He will accept.
- *2 Cor 6: 14-17; 1 Pet 1: 14-16; 2 Tim 2: 19; 1 John 2: 15* – We must strive to live holy lives, separating ourselves from worldly entanglements.
- *Eph 6: 10-17* – We must be spiritually alert and prepared to defend our spiritual territory.

In What Practical Ways Do We Serve God?

- *Eph 1: 19-23; Col 2: 9-10* – Because Christ is the Head of the Church, all our service must be directed to Him. *Matt 25: 34-40* states clearly that all we do for others is done for Christ, because He is our King, our Lord and our Saviour.
- *Rom 12: 4-8; 1Cor 12: 12-14; Eph 4: 4, 16* – Every Christian can serve God because God has a job for each of us to do. *Rom 11: 29* tells us that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. When we do not use our gifts, it lies dormant and useless. This is why Paul admonished Timothy in *2 Tim 1: 6*, to stir up the gift that is in him. We have to use our gifts in order to develop and mature them.
- *Matt 5: 13-16* – By being salt and light in the world. We can use our lives to attract others to the Kingdom. The great majority of the Sermon on the Mount in *Matt 5-7*,

deals with how we should live as citizens of God's Kingdom, to show that we truly belong to Christ.

- *Luke 6: 38; 2 Cor 9: 1-15* – By our giving. God gave Christ to us first – *2 Cor 9: 15*, so we can learn from Him to give to others. He does not like hoarders – *Prov. 3: 9-10, 11: 24-25*.
- *Matt 25: 31-46* – Through caring for the poor and needy in our communities. We make so much of our activities in the Church. While these are good and essential as part of our worship and service, as well as for our spiritual growth, we must realise that Jesus greatly values our practical expression of His love. This is one of the most important ways to share the Gospel with the people around us.

The Holy Spirit is the only One who can make our service truly acceptable to God. As we listen to and obey Him, we will gradually become more like Jesus and please God better in the lives that we live in our homes, workplaces, businesses and communities. Being a child of God is truly the greatest adventure you can embark on. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will enable you to get to see Jesus more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more nearly.

Once again, **WELCOME TO GOD'S FAMILY AND CONGRATULATIONS!!!**

Memory Verses: Romans 12: 1-2

Follow-Up Studies For Growth In Christ

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